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BISHOPS PROTEST CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN EAST TIMOR

The Catholic bishops of Oceania continue to receive, from many sources, reliable reports of killings, imprisonment, torture, rape and bashings of the people of East Timor at the hands of Indonesian forces .

The Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania, comprising bishops from 23 nations in the region, is meeting in Auckland this week.

They call for an end to the injustices and to the general climate of repression, lack of freedom of speech and movement, and the suppression of local culture in East Timor.

The bishops noted with approval a recent petition signed by 51 Members of the New Zealand House of Representatives, which has been presented to the Indonesian Ambassador in New Zealand. The petition deplores the death of about one third of the East Timorese population since the invasion by Indonesian forces in 1975, as a result of military action, atrocities and war-related starvation and disease.

The bishops recognise the place of the Catholic Church in the life and culture of the people of East Timor. They call upon all people of good will to offer them their prayer and support.

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One of the Australian bishops is available for media interviews. Contact Lyndsay Freer, Communications Director for Auckland Diocese for details. Phone Conference No. (09) 625 7783.

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